

Message Text

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STATE FOR CU/EE, EUR/SOV; BELGRADE, LENINGRAD AND WARSAW
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TAGS: OEXC, UR (SMITH, DENNIS)

SUBJECT: VISIT TO MOSCOW STAG DENNIS SMITH

REF: (A) MOSCOW 5799; (B) MOSCOW 2814

1. STAG DENNIS SMITH SPENT FROM JUNE ONE TO JUNE FOUR IN MOSCOW SPEAKING TO VARIOUS GROUPS OF SOVIETS INTERESTED IN AMERICAN LITERATURE. SMITH SPOKE AT ENGLISH LANGUAGE FACULTY MOSCOW UNIVERSITY, LIBRARY OF FOREIGN LITERATURE, UNION OF WRITERS AND THE JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LITERATURE. SMITH'S AUDIENCES WERE COMPOSED OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, LITERARY SCHOLARS, CRITICS AND THOSE WITH AN AMATEUR'S INTEREST IN AMERICAN LITERATURE.

2. SMITH'S MAJOR POINT IN ALL HIS TALKS WITH APPROACH VARYING ACCORDING TO SIZE AND SETTING OF AUDIENCE WAS THAT BLUE COLLAR LITERATURE IS A NEW AND IMPORTANT TREND IN AMERICAN LITERATURE. HE DEFINED IT AS LITERATURE WRITTEN BY BLUE COLLAR WORKERS ABOUT THEIR WORK AND THEMSELVES. THIS DIFFERENT HE NOTED FROM PROFESSIONAL WRITERS SUCH AS JOHN STEINBECK WHO WRITES ABOUT WORKERS BUT IS NOT ONE HIMSELF. SMITH SAID ADVANTAGE
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OF BLUE COLLAR LITERATURE IS THAT WORKER SPEAKS FROM SUPERIOR

VANTAGE POINT AND WRITES WITH MORE SENSITIVITY ABOUT HIMSELF AND RELATION TO HIS WORK. TO ILLUSTRATE POINT SMITH READ EXCERPTS FROM REPORT FROM ENGINE COMPANY 82 AND HIS FORTH-COMING NOVEL THE LAST FIRE, ON HIGH STEEL BY MICHAEL CHERRY AND REFERRED TO THE NEW CENTURIONS AND THE BLUE KNIGHT BY JOSEPH WAUMBAUGH.

3. IN ADDITION SMITH VISITED SOVIET FIRE STATION IN KRASNOGORDSK AND PAID A CALL ON THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATION OF THE MOSCOW CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT WHERE HE WAS RECEIVED BY THE DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF OF MOSCOW. DESPITE ATTENTIVENESS OF SEVERAL COLONELS AND MAJORS OF THE SOVIET FIRE FIGHTING SYSTEM AND THE MANY MODERN PIECES OF EQUIPMENT HE WAS SHOWN AT KRASNOGORDSK FIRE STATION, SMITH CONSIDERED THIS PART OF PROGRAM A QUALIFIED SUCCESS BECAUSE HE HAD LITTLE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH REAL SOVIET FIREMEN. VISIT AND CALL WERE WELL CONTROLLED AND SOMEWHAT STAGEY AND WITH ONE EXCEPTION NO REAL DISCUSSION WITH A MAN WHO ACTUALLY HANDLES A HOSE TOOK PLACE.

4. SMITH VISIT COVERED BY MOSCOW RADIO WHO SENT CORRESPONDENT TO INTERVIEW HIM AT EMBASSY. EMBASSY PRESS SECTION HAD ALSO OFFERED TO MAKE SMITH AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW AT OGONEK AND OTHER POPULAR PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING ONE DEVOTED TO FIRE FIGHTERS, BUT LITTLE INTEREST WAS EXPRESSED. HOWEVER, THE CORRESPONDENTS FOR BOTH THE NEW YORK TIMES AND NEWSWEEK INTERVIEWED SMITH FOR POSSIBLE COVERAGE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS.

5. SMITH WAS INTRODUCED TO POET ANDREI VOZNESENSKY AT APARTMENT OF EMBOFF MOXHAY. VOZNESENSKY INVITED SMITH OUT TO DINNER TWO NIGHTS LATER. SMITH GAVE HIM A COPY OF NEW EDITION OF ANTI MIRY POEMS WHICH HAS JUST BEEN BROUGHT OUT BY US PUBLISHER.

6. EMBASSY MADE GOOD USE OF BOOKS SENT BY ICS. MULTIPLE COPIES OF SMITH'S OWN BOOK AND ON HIGH STEEL, ALONG WITH WORKING BY STUDS TERKEL, WERE PRESENTED TO EACH ORGANIZATION WHICH HAD RECEIVED SMITH. AT BOTH UNION OF WRITERS AND JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LITERATURE THERE WAS SERIOUS TALK OF TRANSLATING REPORT FROM ENGINE CO. 82. IN ADDITION JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LITERATURE INFORMED EMBASSY THAT IT ALREADY AT WORK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON TRANSLATION OF WORKING AND IT WILL APPEAR IN FUTURE ISSUES OF JOURNAL, PERHAPS SOMETIME NEXT YEAR.

7. EMBASSY CONSIDERS SMITH VISIT A MINOR SUCCESS. HE IS AN ENGAGING PERSONALITY AND ARTICULATE SPEAKER WHO IMPRESSED MOST SOVIETS WHO MET HIM AND WAS ABLE TO MAKE THE POINT THAT WORKMAN'S STATUS AND LITERARY TALENT NOT NECESSARILY EXCLUSIVE CATEGORIES. ON OTHER HAND HE NOT COMPLETELY ABLE CONVINCING SOME ELEMENTS

OF AUDIENCE THAT HE EITHER SIGNIFICANT WRITER OR PARTICULARLY
ABLE SPOKESMAN FOR THIS GENRE OF LITERATURE. SMITH MOST
EFFECTIVE IN SMALL GROUPS AS IN TRUE MANY STAGS. AT MEETING
WITH EDITORIAL STAFF OF JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LITERATURE, LIVELY
DISCUSSION ENSUED ON NATURE OF BLUE COLLAR LITERATURE WHILE AT
MORE FORMAL MEETINGS AT UNION OF WRITERS AND LIBRARY OF
FOREIGN LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS FOLLOWING SMITH'S TALK, WHICH
AT TIMES A BIT STIFF BECAUSE SMITH REFERS FREQUENTLY TO WRITTEN
TEXT, WAS BY AND LARGE PERFUNCTORY.

8. ALTHOUGH SMITH EXCELLENT CHOICE FOR INFORMATION CENTER
PROGRAM THAT LOOKING FOR INTERESTING SPEAKER FOR EVENING'S
PROGRAM, HE LESS SUITABLE FOR NEEDS OF MOSCOW PROGRAM.
THERE IS LARGE AND INTERESTED AUDIENCE HERE OF BOTH LITERARY
SCHOLARS AND AVID READERS OF GOOD AMERICAN LITERATURE AND
MOSCOW PROGRAM NEEDS BETTER FILLED BY WRITERS OF STATURE OF
JOYCE CAROL OATES, JOHN GARDNER, JOHN UPDIKE AND SIMILAR FIGURES.
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